



## Everything you wanted to know about storm drains

Most of us don't think much about the storm drains at the end of our driveways or on our streets. Likewise, there probably isn't much thought given to roadside ditches. They're just there. But, storm drains and roadside ditches play a key role in the quality of our region's lakes and rivers.

How? Anything that gets in a storm drain or a roadside ditch goes directly to rivers and lakes without being treated. If anything other than rain — excess fertilizer, pet waste, motor oil, or other chemicals, for example — gets in drains or ditches, our rivers and lakes will become

polluted. A build-up of any of these pollutants in lakes and rivers can be the cause of beach closings and can impact our ability to enjoy time on the water. As a result, the overall quality of life in Southeast Michigan is negatively impacted.

SEMCOG, the Southeast Michigan Council of Governments, and its coalition of members and partners, have recently initiated a program to educate residents on simple things that we can all do to help keep our water clean. The "Seven Simple Steps to Clean Water" begins with an awareness of storm drains. With almost five million people living in Southeast Michigan, here are some simple things that each of us can do to help.

- **Sweep it.** Do you have excess fertilizer, grass clippings, or dirt on your driveway or sidewalk? Sweep it back onto your lawn. Hosing your driveway sends these pollutants into storm drains that lead directly to our lakes and rivers.
- **Keep it clean.** Keep leaves, grass clippings, trash, and fertilizers away from storm drains. Someone on your street should periodically check the drain to make sure its clear of debris. This is especially important after a storm or in autumn when leaves are falling.
- **Only rain in the drain.** Never dump motor oil, chemicals, pet waste, dirty or soapy water, or anything else down the storm drain. All of these materials pollute our lakes and rivers.
- **Label it.** Volunteer to label the storm drains in your neighborhood to inform residents that storm drains flow directly to our lakes and rivers. Many communities have storm drain stenciling programs.

Interested in knowing more? SEMCOG's Web site — [www.semco.org](http://www.semco.org) — contains additional information and tips on things we can do to keep our water clean. After all, it's our water, our future, ours to protect.

SEMCOG is a regional planning partnership of local governmental units serving 4.9 million people in the seven-county region of Southeast Michigan striving to enhance the region's quality of life. The Village of Dexter is a member of SEMCOG.